**Introduction to The Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum**

*Grades 5-12*

**Objective:** Students will be introduced to the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, be able to explain the work of museums, and explain how museums offer historical interpretations and perspectives.

**Time:** 1 – 2 hours depending on the activities engaged.

**NCHS Historical Thinking Standards: *Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations; Appreciate historical perspectives; Draw upon the visual, literary, and musical sources***

**Materials for activities:**

* **Paper**
* **Pencil**
* **Colored pencils/markers**
* **Tape/glue**
* **Poster Board**

**Vocabulary:** curate, artifacts, replica, exhibit

**Anticipatory Set:** How do we connect with our past and remember events that we were not a part of? Perhaps there are items in your home that have been passed down from generation to generation. Maybe your mother has a special dish that was given to her grandmother, or maybe your parents have tucked away a set of baby clothes that you wore for a special occasion. The items pass on memories. Your family members decided that these items were special, but what makes one set of baby clothes more important than another set? Museums hold such items from the past and use those items to tell stories about other times. Often, museums must decide between several different items in order to tell a particular story about the past. Museums can also focus on a number of different topics. For example, some help the public learn about the natural world, while others focus on man-made art or history. To tell these stories, museum specialists **curate**, or specially collect items that center on particular themes and stories. Items that come to us directly from the past are called **artifacts**. If a museum hopes to tell a particular story but is missing an artifact to help tell that story, a **replica**, or an item that is made to look like it came from the past, may be included in the **exhibit**. Exhibits are smaller components of the museum that focus on a particular element of the story. For example, at the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, the story of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War is told. What exhibits do you expect to find at such a museum? What stories might you expect to find?

*Have students read the following description about the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum from the Museum’s website:*

Located on the beautiful campus of Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee, the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum houses one of the most diverse Lincoln and Civil War collections in the country. Exhibited are many rare items - the cane Lincoln carried that fateful night at Ford's Theatre, two life masks, the tea set he and Mary Todd used in their home in Springfield, and numerous other artifacts. Approximately 30,000 books, manuscripts, pamphlets, photographs, paintings and sculptures tell the story of President Lincoln and the Civil War period in America's history.

From its earliest days, LMU began to receive and put on display Civil War and Abraham Lincoln memorabilia. In 1929, a room in Duke Hall of Citizenship was dedicated to house the growing collection. The Lincoln Room served as a showcase for the collection until the early 1970s.

In 1973, University President H. Y. Livesay and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees Dr. Frank G. Rankin shared their dream of a permanent facility to house the Lincoln Collection. Colonel Harland Sanders, a trustee, responded by providing $500,000 to construct the library and museum. The Board of Trustees secured another $500,000, and on December 31, 1974, the University completed the building's fundraising campaign.

The Lincoln Room was retired and a few months later, groundbreaking for the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum was held. The facility was completed in 1977. Today, the museum sees an average of 14,000 visitors per year.

**Discussion:**

1. Have you ever visited a museum? Where was it located, and what types of artifacts did it display?
2. How might you be able to tell the difference between an artifact and a replica?
3. How do you think that museums choose the items that they display?
4. Do you think that an artifact and/or a museum can tell more than one story? Why or why not?

**Activities:**

*These activities may be completed in the classroom or taken home to complete.*

1. Have your students visit the Museum’s website at www.lmunet.edu/museum and select “Online Exhibits.” There, they will find just a few of the collections that are housed at the library. Have the students write a description of the items found within a particular online exhibit, and ask them to identify the story that is told within the exhibit. Ask them to identify how a story might change if different people or items were depicted in the exhibit.
2. Have your students select seven items that they own to tell the story of their own lives. Ask your students to write a paragraph description of each item, describing what the item is and its significance to the student’s life. How would each particular item help a stranger understand the student’s life? To make the activity interactive, ask students to create an exhibit of their seven items on poster board using images of those items and their written descriptions. In a class presentation, ask your students why they chose to curate those particular items. In class conversation that follows, ask fellow classmates what seven items they might have chosen for the student who is presenting. Discuss the different perspectives that emerge.